

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALTERITY.  
HUSSERL ON REFERENCING AND INDICATING\***

**LOS FUNDAMENTOS DE LA ALTERIDAD.  
HUSSERL SOBRE REFERENCIAS E INDICACIONES**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to dig out the fundamental structure that underlies Husserl's description of two basic aspects of the alterity to the self, namely the world and the Other. This structure is a referential and indicating scheme: the problem of reference and indication lies at the base of the constitution of the things in the world, where the front-side refers to the rear-side, and in the experience of another human being, where his body is always already referring to mine.

This structure poses a number of serious problems for the phenomenological project as such, most notably in its claim of founding a scientific philosophy: it is difficult to understand how we can ground a pure phenomenological philosophy on the alterity of the Other and on the alterity of the world if this very alterity is based on an "impure" (mediated) element, an element which Husserl himself ruled out of his conception since every *Gegebenheit* must be *Selbstgegebenheit*.

**Key Words:** Husserl, Referencing, Alterity, Science.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este trabajo es desenterrar la estructura fundamental que subyace en la descripción de Husserl de dos aspectos básicos de la alteridad del yo, es decir, el mundo y el Otro. Esta estructura es un esquema de referencias y indicaciones. El problema de la referencia y de la indicación se encuentra en la base de la constitución de las cosas en el mundo, donde el lado frontal se refiere a la parte trasera, y en la experiencia de otro ser humano, donde su cuerpo siempre se refiere al mío.

Esta estructura representa una serie de problemas graves para el proyecto fenomenológico como tal, sobre todo en su pretensión de fundar una filosofía científica: es difícil entender cómo se puede fundamentar una filosofía fenomenológica pura en la alteridad del otro ser humano y en la alteridad del mundo si esta alteridad se basa en un elemento "impuro" (mediado), un elemento que Husserl descartó de su concepción, puesto que cada *Gegebenheit* debe ser *Selbstgegebenheit*.

**Palabras clave:** Husserl, referencia, alteridad, ciencia.

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## INTRODUCTION

One can detect at least two different types of alterity to the self<sup>1</sup> in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl: on the one side there is the alterity of the world (including the objects within the world) and on the other side the alterity of Others, i. e., of other human beings. These two kinds of alterity are at the same time two ways in which the givenness (*Gegebenheit*) of phenomena can come to show itself to us and to the thinking philosopher. In the first case the givenness is of a radical alterity to the *ego cogito*, of something which does not itself think, and in the second case we are faced with something which is not merely *alter*, but is precisely an *alter ego*, i.e. someone that thinks as much as my ego thinks.

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the original structure that underlies both of these aspects of the givenness of things, i.e. of the *phenomenon* itself, which is obviously the core of the whole phenomenological project. In particular, we will try to show to what extent this structure which underlies the foundations of alterity itself is no more than a mutation of the concept of sign or, more broadly, of the concept of "referencing", a mutation which follows a particular path in the development of Husserl's thought. Since we have to deal with the evolution of an element which pervades Husserl's thought in its entirety, we must renounce an extensive confrontation with the whole of Husserl's production. We shall therefore focus on a couple of "turning points" in which this intersection of problems arises with particular lucidity and which shall allow us to draw some preliminary conclusions.

The first of these turning points can be found in the form of an explicit discussion (the only one really explicit, to be sure) of the concept of sign by Husserl in his early work, the first *Logical Investigation*. The first part of my text presents this preliminary way of dealing with the problem of the sign and in particular with the question of indication, by making its role within the founda-

<sup>1</sup> There is of course at least one more alterity in the phenomenology of Husserl, namely the alterity of the self to the self (*Selbstandersheit*), as one can see for example in the analysis of the body (*Fremdheit des Eigenleibs*) and of memory (*Erinnerung als Andersheit des Selbst*), but we would like to focus here on the radical alterity of those phenomena which cannot be *immediately* traced back to selfness. I would like to thank Virginie Palette for the passionate and precise confrontation we had on some central points of this paper.

tions of phenomenology explicit and by offering a brief discussion of what makes a sign precisely a sign, namely *referencing*.

In the second part I will point out a similar referential structure in Husserl's discussion of the alterity of the world. I will show that the givenness of things and the constitution of objects (and of *noemata*) in our experiential field is only possible on the basis of such a referential structure. This structure is most present in the considerations about *adumbration*. I will also try to show in which way this referential structure involves the body as its condition of possibility. In this survey I shall focus primarily on a few of central Husserlian texts, the fifth and sixth of the *Logical Investigations*, *Thing and Space* and *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*.

In the third part I will shift my focus of attention from the alterity of the world to the alterity of the Other. Here, I will argue that the Husserlian explanation of the living body (*Leib*) as the experience of another ego, i.e. of the *alter ego*, cannot be understood without this concept of referencing, because the body of the Other is always subject to a referencing back and forth with of own body.

In the fourth and last part I will try to draw a few conclusions from what I have pointed out, most notably by trying to dig out the importance of the concept of reference with its interpenetration with the concept of sign, as it was intended in the first writings. I will then underline its importance for the phenomenological quest for a pure logic and a scientific philosophy by saying that referencing and sign are the foundations of alterity. Then I will suggest some questions and options for further inquiry.

## 1. SIGN, EXPRESSIONS AND INDICATIONS

It is well known that the first of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* contains a sketch for a theory of sign and meaning<sup>2</sup>. In this text Husserl draws some "essential distinctions" concerning the ambiguity of the term "sign": on the one hand there are indications, which are signs that do not express anything, and

<sup>2</sup> The most famous inquiry about this first pages of the first *Logical Investigation* can be found in Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, translated by L. Lawlor, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2010.

on the other hand there are meaningful signs, i.e. expressions. It is interesting to note that Husserl does not discuss the term "sign" in itself in the *Logical Investigations*. Here he only separates the two possible aspects of it. The only definition of "sign" which Husserl gives can be found in an earlier work, *Zur Logik des Zeichens. Semiotik* (1890), where Husserl says that "Der Begriff des Zeichens ist [...] ein Verhältnisbegriff; er weist hin auf ein Bezeichnetes"<sup>3</sup>: "the concept of the sign is a relational concept; it *refers* to something designated"<sup>4</sup>. We can see here that the main feature of sign is its capacity to refer<sup>5</sup> to something which the sign itself is not.

This "referencing" aspect, which is the most important aspect of the sign, is present both in the expression (*Ausdruck*<sup>6</sup>) and in indication (*Anzeichen*), but it is especially in the account of indication that we can find a particular determination of this concept<sup>7</sup>. We want therefore to focus here on this aspect, on this variation of the theme of the sign, i. e. the indication (*Anzeichen*), by recalling Husserl's definition:

certain objects or states of affair of whose reality [*Bestand*] someone has actual knowledge indicate [*anzeigen*] to him the reality of certain other objects or states of affairs, in the sense that his belief in the reality [*Sein*] of the one is experienced (though not at all evidently [*als ein nichteinsichtiges Motiv*]) as motivating a belief or surmise in the reality of the other.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Zur Logik des Zeichens. Semiotik* in Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie der Arithmetik*, Husserliana (in the following: Hua) XII, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1970, p. 341. On the development of Husserl's concept of sign see the texts collected in E. Husserl, *Semiotica*, edited by Carmine di Martino, Milan, Spirali 1998.

<sup>4</sup> My translation, my emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> I would like to understand the word "reference" as a translation of the German words *Hinweisen* und *Hinzeigen*, which not necessarily bear any connection with the semantic concept of a word referring to its meaning.

<sup>6</sup> An enriching study on the problematic relation of expression and body in the phenomenology of Husserl is Sara Heinämaa, "Embodiment and Expressivity in Husserl's Phenomenology: From Logical Investigations to Cartesian Meditations", *SATS – Northern European Journal of Philosophy*, 2010 \ 1, pp. 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> In this way, we would like to suggest how the term "reference" is an element both of *Ausdruck* and of *Anzeige*. In § 8 Husserl says that expressions in solitary mental life are not indications anymore; this does not mean, however, that they don't have any referencing function; indeed, here Husserl speaks of "Hinzeigen", which is a kind of "referencing" in the broader sense of this word (Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen, Zweiter Teil*, edited by Ursula Panzer, Hua XIX, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1984, p. 42).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25, English translation: E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Volume II, London and New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 184

According to Husserl's description, the reference of indication is not only a mere pointing to, but it *motivates* me to believe in the existence ("reality" is the word in the English translation for *Sein*) of something which the indicating sign itself is not. In other words, indication *posits* the existence of something. This shift is actually the most important property of every referential relation, namely the capacity of something to indicate *something else in its being*. Motivation and reference are deeply interconnected in this interpretation of sign and indication: the motivation refers to something which does not appear in itself, and only on the basis of this referencing can we have an indication<sup>9</sup>.

It is also very important to recall that Husserl's definition of indication in these pages excludes indication itself as a possible element for the foundation of a scientific language, i.e. of a pure logic (which is the aim of the whole *Logical Investigations*)<sup>10</sup>, precisely because it is not at all evident (*nicht einsichtig*). Therefore we can say that with the question of sign the very destination of phenomenology as pure logic is at stake: the aim of phenomenology is the building up of a pure logic, which is to be the primary instrument for all sciences<sup>11</sup>. But this can only happen on the basis of foundations which have to be *pure*, which have to be evident – and indication is neither pure nor evident. The classical claim of foundationalism – and in this case Husserl is very classical – is that we can find a basic element on which to build a system of knowledge and theories. According to the Cartesian definition this foundation has to be clear and evident. But the sign is not evident (it is only a motif for a belief, and not an entire justification), and it is not even clear, because it refers to something obscure, to something which is not itself present.

<sup>9</sup> In the first *Logical Investigation* the problem of the sign is discussed mostly from a linguistic point of view, because the *Untersuchung* as a whole aims at the establishment of a possible scientific language for pure logic. This does not mean, however, that Husserl's analysis does not take into account also non-linguistic signs and indications. The whole of Husserl's philosophy of language is joined together with the problem of the sign, but obviously we cannot face this question at length here. See on this point most notably Dieter Münch, *Intention und Zeichen. Untersuchungen zu Franz Brentano und zu Edmund Husserls Frühwerk*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1993.

<sup>10</sup> "The outcome of our investigation [...] will be the delineation of a new, purely theoretical science, the all-important foundation for any technology of scientific knowledge, and itself having the character of an a priori, purely demonstrative science: [...] a 'formal' or 'pure' logic." (Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Volume I, p. 14).

<sup>11</sup> On the status of phenomenology for a foundationalist program see E. Ströker, *The Husserlian Foundations of Science*, Washington, Springer 1997, and W. Hopp, "Husserl, Phenomenology, and Foundationalism", *Inquiry* 51 (2008), pp. 194-217.

## 2. ADUMBRATIONS. REFERENCE AND THINGS IN THE WORLD

This first Husserlian discussion of “something which refers”, i.e. of indication, appears, as already pointed out, in an inquiry concerning mostly language, logic and meaning. But this is not the only context in which this problem appears in this early work.

In the sixth of the *Logical Investigations* Husserl thematizes the problem of adumbrations for the first time<sup>12</sup> as a key moment in the description of the mode of appearance of things in the world, or, more precisely, of things in our experiential field. Here is the passage in question:

the object is not actually given, it is not given wholly and entirely as that which it itself is. It is only given “from the front”, only “perspectively foreshortened and projected” etc. While many of its properties are illustrated in the nuclear content of the percept [...], many others are not present in the percept [...]: the elements of the invisible rear side, the interior etc., are no doubt subsidiarily intended in a more or less definite fashion, symbolically suggested by what is primarily apparent, but are not themselves part of the intuitive [...] percept.<sup>13</sup>

Here, there is a symbolic relation, a *suggestive and symbolic* referencing, between the front-side of the thing – which is actually given – and the rear-side, which is just suggested or symbolized by the actually given one. In what way can we understand this symbolic and suggestive relation? What does it mean that the front side *suggests* the rear side?

Husserl does not say very much about this topic, but he does discuss the symbolic relation by claiming that this “imaginal” or symbolic representation is the *assertion* of the *being* of something in a symbolic fashion<sup>14</sup>. Husserl is saying that the symbolic relation of the front-side of a thing and its rear-side is a relation in which the ego, which perceives, is brought to believe (through motivation) that the rear side really exists: this existence is *asserted* and *suggested*. This relation motivates one to believe in the being of something which is not directly present. As we saw, this was precisely the structure of indication that

<sup>12</sup> The word “*Abschattung*” occurs in the other *Investigations* too, altogether three times, but never in the proper sense of “absent side” of a thing – or as I would rather say: as the side of a thing *referred to*.

<sup>13</sup> E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Volume II, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 281.

we discussed above. Therefore, in this case, we also have to deal with a kind of reference, symbolic and suggestive, between something which is actually given, and something which is not; this description of a reference is nearly identical with the description of indication in the first *Logical Investigation*. We can say that in both indication as a logical element and in the ontological symbolic suggestion there is a common element, namely referencing. In this way the question of referencing takes a central role not only in an analysis concerning a possible scientific language, but also in ontology, epistemology and theory of perception.

My claim is that it is already possible in the *Logical Investigations* to say that the fundamental form of the phenomenon (the percept, the thing as it shows itself) lies within an indicative and referencing relation. It is precisely this referencing structure that we find at the core of the way in which things are phenomenologically given to us. In the sixth *Logical Investigation* Husserl presents this relation as a symbolic indication, which is neither linguistic nor logic. I think we can make sense of what Husserl is saying by recognizing that *some kind* of referencing must take place in order to make the givenness of things and any form of sign, linguistic or not, possible. This produces a very peculiar interrelatedness of the logical and the ontological, a tangling which must have consequences for the epistemological project of phenomenology.

Perhaps after writing the *Logical Investigations* Husserl is blocked by the same problems we have suggested and changes his mind on this topic in *Thing and Space* (1907). Here the relation between the two sides of a thing is described differently – or at least, he wants to describe it differently. In the lecture of 1907 Husserl thematizes this change of interpretation:

In earlier lectures, I used to express myself as follows: what improperly appears is represented by the given sensations not directly but indirectly, not by resemblance but by contiguity, not intuitively but symbolically [...]. I have now more than misgivings on this mode of expression, insofar as nothing of presentation [...] clings to the contents of sensation [...]. The reference back and forth [*Hinweise und Rückweise*], which constitute the object's givenness in the elapsing of a manifold of

appurtenant perceptions, do not concern merely the sensations but the totality of appearances in the unitary consciousness<sup>15</sup>.

Here, there is a variation<sup>16</sup> in Husserl's conception of the givenness of the "improperly appearing" side of a thing. Husserl namely states that the "back and forth references" are not symbolic references, but those of another species. After Husserl rules out the possibility to intend the mode of givenness of rear-sides as given in the mode of fantasy or imagination ("even in fantasy we can't represent a house from the front and from the back at the same time"<sup>17</sup>), he states that we have to develop a new and less naive concept of perception, which is capable of sustaining this referencing without being symbolical. The structure of empty and full intentions remains a complex of full and empty intentions, as in the *Logical Investigations*:

Perception is, as I express it, a complex of full and empty intentions [...]; the full intentions or full apprehensions are the properly presentational ones, and the empty are precisely empty of any presentational material.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless this complex has changed: the empty intentions are not caused by the thing itself, the phenomenon, but by the "unitary consciousness". Maybe we can resume what happens in these passages in the following way: in the *Logical Investigations* Husserl claims that the relationship between proper and improper presentations of a thing is symbolic, i.e. the relation lies in the thing itself, at the core of the presentational structure of the phenomenon, although obviously intertwined with empty and full intentions; on the other hand he states in the *Dingvorlesung* that this was an error, and that we must think of this ensemble of full and empty intentions not in relation to the phenomenon itself, but as originated through the consciousness of the subject

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*, Hua XVI, edited by Ulrich Claesges. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, English translation: Edmund Husserl, *Thing and Space*, The Hague, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1997, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Ulrich Melle detects the same variation: Cf. U. Melle, "La représentation vide dans la réécriture par Husserl de la VI<sup>e</sup> Recherche Logique", in: J. Benoist, J.-F. Courtine, *Les Recherches Logiques, une oeuvre de percée*, PUF, Paris 2003, S. 153-164.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56. This claim rests on the idea that the front-side of a thing and its rear-side *must* be somehow co-present – this is the key element that bears the whole enterprise of *Thing and Space*, whose aim is to explain the constitution of an object (*Gegenstand*) in its identity and unity from the perceptions that we have in our fields of experience.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

(*Einheitsbewußtsein* or *Identitätsbewußtsein*). We have therefore a change in the description, from the object itself with its referencing, to the conditions of possibility of its perception, that is to unitary consciousness with its full and empty intentions, the so-called *Strahlbündel* of intentions.

But a problem arises, when one follows on the Husserlian analysis. A few pages later Husserl explains that each adumbration “points forward” to other adumbrations:

We *feel* ourselves drawn on from adumbration to adumbration [...]; in this forward referral, the adumbration is an intimation of what is now coming [...]. The one-sided view opens out to what is “omni-sided”.<sup>19</sup>

This opening of what is “omni-sided” is passive: we *feel* ourselves, so Husserl, directed to something else by the side itself, and not by something which belongs to us – for example, perception or unitary consciousness. This opening-up movement is made possible by the structure of the adumbration itself, which “points forward” to a side which is not immediately present, and not by some kind of active consciousness. In other words: we need a referencing structure which remains in the phenomenon itself in order to correctly *intend*, both in an empty and in a full way. We are motivated to have empty intentions (which have a specific direction) precisely by the thing itself. In Husserl's description there is a tension between a perception that is itself an ensemble of full and empty intentions and a perceived reality which implies a pointing structure – and not a symbolical one. The front side is no longer considered a symbol for the rear-side, but something which points to its existence.

We can interpret Husserl by saying that no pointing structure is possible without a corresponding structure in the perception. This is the fundamental move of correlation and therefore of phenomenology in Husserl's texts after the *Logical Investigations*, as he “discovers” the *epoché*. There is, however, a different problem at stake here: it seems that a kind of twofold referencing exists. On the one hand, the phenomenon, the side of the thing that appears, refers to the rear side by way of pointing out to it and, on the other hand, and at the same time, this pointing out is referred back to the self, to the ego that per-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100. My italics.

ceives and which is capable of *intending* the rear-side, and this precisely in the mode of an empty intention.

The fact that Husserl still concedes the “presence” of a pointing instance in the thing itself seems to question a real detachment from the position in the *Logical Investigations*. It seems that Husserl grasps the need for a correspondent structure of perception, but he cannot really abandon his first claim, which means, he can't dismiss the referencing structure and must redouble it.

This tension is clear in the *Analyses Concerning Passive Synthesis*, to which I shall now dedicate some remarks. Allow me a long quotation in order to signal the importance of the thematic of adumbration in every phenomenological theory of perception. In this text Husserl begins by noting that

the aspect, the perspectival adumbration through which every spatial object invariably appears, only manifests the spatial object from one side. No matter how completely we may perceive a thing, it is never given in perception with the characteristics that qualify it and make it up as a sensible thing from all sides at once. We cannot avoid speaking of such and such sides of the object that are actually perceived. Every aspect, every continuity of single adumbrations, regardless how far this continuity may extend, offers us only sides. And to our mind this is not just a mere statement of fact: It is inconceivable that external perception would exhaust the sensible material content of its perceived object; it is inconceivable that a perceptual object could be given in the entirety of its sensibly intuitive features, literally, from all sides at once in a self-contained perception. Thus, this fundamental division between what is genuinely perceived and what is not genuinely perceived belongs to the primordial structure of the correlation.<sup>20</sup>

Since we cannot perceive a thing from all of its sides at the same time, the fundamental structure of perception involves a perspectival view. And in order to have a consciousness of the unity of an object (*Einheitsbewusstsein*), we have to explain how the different views on a thing can stay together, that is, we must explain how the different aspects of a thing, how different *Gegebenheiten* imply one another. In the text it seems that Husserl uses a con-

<sup>20</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918-1926)*, edited by Margot Fleischer, Hua XI, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1966, English translation: Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, The Hague, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, p. 39-40.

ception of a *perception* (and not of the thing itself, of the side itself<sup>21</sup>) that implies that perception itself has a double structure of empty and full intentions, as we saw in *Thing and Space*. But then he comes back to a terminology that is reminiscent of the terminology used in the *Logical Investigations*. On the one hand, the passage which we are going to read accentuates the nearness to the lectures on *Thing and Space*, by stating that *consciousness* is always also a co-conscious-having of other sides that are precisely not originally there, and on the other hand (and at the same time) it focuses more strongly on the aspect of indication and referencing which still underlies his descriptions of the givenness of things:

I say co-conscious, since the non-visible sides are certainly also there somehow for consciousness, "co-meant" or co-present. But they do not appear as such, genuinely [...]. It is clear that a non-intuitive pointing beyond [*unanschauliche Hinausweisen*] or indicating [*Indizieren*] is what characterizes the side actually seen as a mere side, and what provides for the fact that the side is not taken for the thing, but rather, that something transcending the side is intended.<sup>22</sup>

In order to have this double structure of empty and full intentions, perception has to be motivated by something which is double in itself, a *Bündel* of something which appears directly and something which appears only in a mediated way. In this text it is possible to find a whole system of concepts which gravitates to the area of indication and "pointing to" something else. Husserl says that "the particular givenness *refers* [*verweist*] to something else that is not given, as what is not given belonging to the same object"<sup>23</sup>. But there are no single indications, but rather indicative systems, systems of "rays" (*Strahlen*): these are "pointers into an emptiness". These pointers are exactly what motivate the perceiving ego, which is now – thanks to these pointers – able to direct his attention to the sides which are not originally given.

In order to elucidate the problem of motivation Husserl writes even in a "suggestive manner" (his words), which is a totally strange moment within his

<sup>21</sup> It is always problematic to speak of a thing itself in Husserl. We are trying to accentuate the difference between the way a thing shows itself and the thing which shows itself, the thing as it appears as such, not yet constituted as whole object.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41. After a few lines Husserl speaks again of "empty indication".

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*.

writings, where the sobriety of the analysis usually holds the upper hand. He describes such a structure in the following way:

There is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides, let your gaze run through me, draw closer to me, open me up, divide me up; keep on looking me over again and again, turning me to see all sides. You will get to know me like this, all that I am, all my surface qualities, all my inner sensible qualities.<sup>24</sup>

Apparently the term "indication", that Husserl uses here, stands in a direct relation to the "indication" of the *Logical Investigations*. They seem to be the same, according to the English translation. But we have to be aware that this is a deception, because Husserl uses two very different words in German, *Anzeichen* (or *Anzeigen* as verb) in the first text, and in the second a series of words that derives from *Weisen*: *Hinweisen*, *Hinausweisen*, *Verweisen*, but also *Indizieren*, *Tendenzen* and *Zeiger*, only the last of which is etymologically related to the verb *Anzeigen*.

But Husserl is aware of the possibility for misunderstanding, and he says quite expressly that we must not understand this relation as an interpretative one: "Adumbrating, exhibiting in data of sensation, is totally different from an interpretation through signs (*signitives Deuten*)". The shift, as we saw in the conference *Thing and Space*, is always at work here: we are not to think of this relation as a symbolic one. The two descriptions are not only similar: the structure of the "pointing to" is maintained, although not as a "*signitiv*" or symbolic structure, and the moment or the aspect of *motivation* comes into play, as I have anticipated above. This is already obvious as one reads the "suggestive" passage as quoted, and which is introduced by Husserl when he says that the actually given side "calls out for us [*zurufen*]"<sup>25</sup>. But this is of course different from the motivation of the *Anzeichen*. In the second case there is a motivation for a belief; here we believe that there is the adumbration, we believe that there is the side of the thing which the sign is pointing to. In the first case there is a motivation that points toward a *corporeal* movement; the hidden sides provide possibilities for movement, in order to come into contact with things or other sides of the thing: this motivation is a challenge for motion, and not a

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*. He uses these formulations again on page 43.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41. On page 43 he insists on this by saying that it is a "call" which we have to do with here.

motivation for a belief of existence – or at least not specifically. The rear-side is going to appear as actually given only after our body has been “called” and has made a movement in order to actualize the rear-side, which is now present as a front-side itself.

We are now dealing with a referencing structure (whereby reference is taken as the most generic word in order to describe this kind of relation) which is very different from the one in the *Logical Investigations*, but which is also similar to some extent to that one. The new element which comes into play in *Thing and Space* and *Analyses Concerning Passive Synthesis* is precisely the body. We no longer have to deal with the belief in the existence, in the being of a thing (and how could it be after the “discovery” of *epoché*?); instead we find ourselves more concerned with the body and its movement, and the motivation for that movement: we want to move around the thing, we want to see more aspects of it. To put it simply, the new element for consideration is: interaction between body and thing. This new kind of “bodily reference” is the basis for the problem of *Kinaesthesen*: perception is necessarily embedded into our body and into its capacity to move around. The constitution of space as that structure in which objects (as a whole, that is, as things in their unity and identity) can appear calls for the action of the body and needs the positing of a zero point (*Nullpunkt*) around which the world is constituted by my passive synthesis.

The cooperation of referring, as a feature of that which shows itself (and not only as a structure of perception), and corporeal movement allows phenomenology to build a realm in which it is possible to speak of objects and, therefore, to speak of objectivity as the presupposition of every science which wants to understand itself as a rational and purely logical enterprise. The sign (here, intended, as in the first sketch on semiotic of Husserl, in the most general way, as that which refers to something else) and the body lie at the bottom of the foundation of the alterity of the objective (in both sense of *gegenständlich* and *objektiv*) world and therefore also of phenomenology, as a project which aims at an objective knowledge.

### 3. ALTER EGO, ALTER CORPUS. REFERENCE AND THE OTHER

Now, I would like to outline the referential structure (if any) that underlies the other fundamental kind of alterity in Husserl's philosophy, namely that of the other human being<sup>26</sup>. In order to do this the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations* shows itself as one of these "turning points" which we have to discuss if we are to make sense of the problem of alterity in phenomenology and if we want to discover the particular structure that underlies it, namely the reference.

Already in the first pages of this *Meditation* we are confronted with a referential description of the Other:

The "Other", according to his own constituted sense, points to me myself; the Other is a "mirroring" of my own self and yet not a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense.<sup>27</sup>

When the Other is constituted, he points to myself, he is even a mirroring of myself. But this is no longer a problem, if we keep in mind the advances in the comprehension of the referencing structure that we made with *Thing and Space* and *Analysis Concerning Passive Synthesis*: the constituted Other, that is the Other as my ego relates to it in all his modes of perception, brings in itself a reference to me insofar as he is a mirroring of myself. The Other is, as constituted, *like* myself. But it is not only in this moment, at the level of a constituted identity, that Husserl's description of the experience of the Other has the mark of referencing and indication. Insofar as the Other is himself here "*leibhaftig*", even if he is not yet constituted as Other, he brings along a field of elements which do not appear, such as the other ego himself, his subjective thinking processes and so forth. Before the constitution we have no experience of the Other

<sup>26</sup> In the following analysis I can't deal with a complete reconstruction of Husserl's discussion of the alterity of the Other in its many elements and aspects. The central core is to outline the fact that Husserl needs, in order to describe this kind of alterity, a referencing structure, as it was the case with the alterity of things in the external world. My aim is not at a complete representation of Husserl's position, and therefore this article can't deal with many important aspects of the question, such as the role of indexicality and body in *Ideas II* (Hua IV) or in the *Manuskripte zur Intersubjektivität* (Hua XIII, XIV, XV). The impressive amount of research literature on this topic is also not really proficuous for our analysis, since the thema of reference within intersubjectivity has not been explored at length.

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, edited by Stephan Strasser, Hua I, The Hague, Martinus Nijhof, 1991, English translation: *Cartesian Meditations. An introduction to Phenomenology*, translated by Dorion Cairns, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960, p. 94.

as Other, but only of the Other as “that body over there.” The body of the Other manifests itself at first glance<sup>28</sup> as mere body (*Körper*); the *alter ego* is, correctly seen, an *alter corpus*. How is then constitution to be activated? What makes the perceiving subject constitute the body of the Other not as a mere *Körper*, but first of all as a living body (*Leib*) and then as a real person?

Through the experience of the Other (and most notably of his corporeality) we are “directed” to elements which are not originally there. With the experience of the other body we face the same state of affairs as with the experience of other things, and Husserl is very clear on this point:

A certain mediacy of intentionality must be present here [...] and making present to consciousness a “there too”, which nevertheless is not itself there and can never become an “itself-there”. We have here, accordingly, a kind of making “co-present”, a kind of “appresentation”. An appresentation occurs even in external experience, since the strictly seen front of a physical thing always and necessarily appresents a rear aspect and prescribes for it a more or less determinate content.<sup>29</sup>

There is in fact a fundamental difference between this appresentation and that of other things, and this difference lies within the concept of motivation. I am arguing that in the experience of the Other we come closer to the definition of *Anzeichen* as it was given in the first *Logical Investigation* than in the experience of the outer world. In the case of the body of another person namely, the motivation that “comes out” of him (maybe we can say with *Analyses Concerning Passive Synthesis* “the call of the other body”) brings one not to a corporeal movement<sup>30</sup>, but to a belief, namely the belief that the Other is a subjectivity as my own<sup>31</sup>. Husserl constitutes this parallelism by stating that the sense of “someone else” is motivated by my own Ego: the Other is always an *alter*

<sup>28</sup> In the sphere of primordial reduction the Other appear as a mere *Körper*, because everything that is associated with another subjectivity has been excluded by reduction *per definitionem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>30</sup> As one may remember, the things “call” me to turn them, to keep looking on them and so on. The corporeality of the Other as a thing in the world (*Körper*) motivates me to a corporeal movement, but this motivation is not the core of the experience of the Other, quite obviously. The constituted body of the Other is *Leib* and not only *Körper* precisely because it motivates me also in another way, namely, it motivates me in *believing* that the body of the Other also carries forth an ego such as I myself do.

<sup>31</sup> This kind of motivation is also at stake in *Ideas II*. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, edited by Marly Biemel, Hua IV, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1952, p. 235.

*ego*<sup>32</sup>. I can understand the Other only because I am a corporeality with a consciousness: I see the Other as mere body (*Körper*) and I have to obtain the sense of his Otherness through myself and through the similarity between his body and my body:

It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity connecting, within my primordial sphere, that body over there with my body can serve as the motivational basis for the "analogizing" apprehension of that body as another animate organism<sup>33</sup>.

On this topic Husserl comes back to the notion of indication (*Indizieren, Index*) that he used in the *Analyses Concerning Passive Synthesis*. The physical side indicates something psychic (the existence of something psychic) by passing through my living body, which is for me never a mere body but always already *Leib*, and this is precisely what constitutes the body of the Other as a living body. This experience of the Other as a *Leib* is the experience of something which is not given originally but which has been motivated, indicated, and referred to<sup>34</sup>.

In these pages Husserl makes a very important remark on the problems that we are facing here. He states explicitly that the body of someone else is not an *Anzeige*<sup>35</sup> (the English translation here is also "indication", which fails to distinguish between the German *Indizieren* and *Anzeigen*) or a signal for an analogue, because this would be an "obviously inconceivable motivation"<sup>36</sup>. What is then this body which indeed motivates me? Is the body of the Other *Ausdruck*, expression, in the sense of the first *Logical Investigation*?

We have now two possibilities to choose from. First, we could say that the non-constituted body of the Other is an expression, that is, it carries a *meaning* along with itself. This would erase all the possibility of a pure experience on which the constitution could build up. We would therefore have to renounce to every claim of empiricism in order to presuppose a reality (or at least a part of reality, the body of another person) which is always already charged with a

<sup>32</sup> E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 109-110.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114-115.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122.

meaning. But, if I understood Husserl correctly, speaking of *Körper* instead of body as the original, non-constituted experience of the Other aims precisely at stating that the Other is first of all (in the sense of the reduction to the primordial sphere) a mere thing, which has to be constituted by us and through us (and our body) in order to become a subjectivity by his own.

The second possible interpretation is that we could say that Husserl does not intend to refer to the distinction of the first *Logical Investigation* by saying that the Other is not an *Anzeige*, but that he only wants to rule out the possibility of taking this referencing in a *linguistic* sense. If that is what he means then what is at stake here is not the capacity of the body of referring to me, but only its linguisticality, its "*signitiv*" or symbolical character, as we saw in the case of the experience of the world. I would therefore say that the Other is precisely this, an *Anzeige*, but not in a linguistic sense – and this is what I mean by *reference*<sup>37</sup>. In this way, the particular kind of referencing of the other body is precisely a non-linguistic indication (*Anzeige*) as in the case of the experience of external things.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS. REFERENCE AND SCIENCE

To sum up this discussion, I would like to claim that in both analyses of the alterity, that of the world and that of the other human being, a certain element is at work, to which in Husserl's texts only short considerations are dedicated, that is reference. Husserl neither thematically discusses nor expressly introduces the problem of reference. In the writings after 1907 it is close to the definition of indication in the first *Logical Investigation*, it is not symbolical as in the sixth *Investigation*, and not only perceptive as in *Thing and Space*. If we hold to the similarities of the concept of reference in its later developments to the question of indication in the first writings, and particularly in its relationship with the sign, it seems that we have a concept which underlies the most im-

<sup>37</sup> My use of the concept of reference is obviously not completely detached from the more classical phenomenological term of association, but since this term in Husserl's work oft comes along with psychology (he speaks namely of *Assoziationspsychologie*) I prefer the term "reference" in order to highlight that this is an ontological feature of phenomena, and not only of perception. On Husserl and association, see most notably Elmar Holenstein, *Phänomenologie der Assoziation: zu Struktur und Funktion eines Grundprinzips der passiven Genesis bei E. Husserl*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 1972.

portant aspects in the foundations of alterity inside a phenomenological project. Despite the importance which the problem of sign bears (understood in this way, sign – with the definition of *Semiotik* – is everything that refers to something else), Husserl does not dedicate extensive analyses to it.

Let us see, as a conclusion, the important role played by this concept in the whole of Husserl's philosophy. Namely, it should be immediately clear that the concepts of sign, indication and reference as I have described them serve as the elements which permit Husserl to build up a theory of alterity: we have the Other as Other only insofar as we constitute him as such – and in order to do this we have to presuppose that his body (*Körper*) brings along a whole system of referencing back and forth, first of all with my living body (*Leib*). And in the case of external perception, in order to have an object as such (*Gegenstand*) we have to constitute it, and this is not possible insofar as it is a mere scattering of different parts or sides which have no interconnections to one another. The single side has to refer to the other sides of a thing in order to create relations and, in the end, a whole context (*Zusammenhang*) in which it is possible for us to conceive a thing in its entirety and unity.

We can create an overall picture of this problem if we keep in mind that in the *Cartesian Meditation* it is precisely the *alterity* of the Other in *intersubjectivity* that allows for the establishing of a field of objective knowledge. This, in turn, rests on the *alterity* of the things. The foundations of alterity, namely references, are also the foundations of objective knowledge, and therefore of every possible scientificity. In the *Logical Investigations* the linguistic sign is the foundation (as *Ausdruck*) of the scientific language; in the *Cartesian Meditations* the ontological sign is the foundation of objectivity as such.

A couple of questions arise, which demand more analysis and engagement with Husserl's phenomenology: Is the whole of Husserl's enterprise of escaping solipsism by way of foundations of alterity based on a problematic and obscure element, whose difficulty Husserl was aware of from the very beginning, when he tried to ground a pure logic? Is the exclusion of the indicative form from all scientific purposes that is discussed in the first main work still tacitly presupposed in the late works, as the reference to the "unconceivable motivation" in the *Cartesian Meditations* let us suppose? How would this fit into a description

of the world and the givenness of things and of other human beings that is always already referential and therefore not scientific?